JIM LEE

WILDC.A.T.S

COVERT ACTION TEAMS

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DC

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It is no big secret that Image's main problem has been of timeliness. Many fans have patiently waited and understood when we have offered explanations. Marriages, births, double-sized issues, production delays—all have been cited as contributing factors.

That said, the burning question that I still get these days is "Where is Wetworks?!!" While I am not technically involved with Whilce Portacio's Image project, I am his friend and studio partner and have the good fortune of sharing my entire career with him. My first work was inked by Whilce, and we have gone down strikingly parallel paths—working on the Punisher titles and later the X-books at similar points in our careers.

Of comics professionals, few people have gotten the chance to get to know him as well as Scott Williams and myself. Those who have been fortunate enough have seen the depths of his devotion to his family and his friends. Those who know Whilce would understand the devastation he and his family felt when his younger sister, Gemma, passed away early this year after a long and trying battle against a debilitating disease called Lupus.

As it should be, Whilce has always put his family before his work and has been there for his sister as long as I can recall, whether baby-sitting for Gemma's daughter or standing vigil by her bedside on her extended hospital stays. I had the fortune of getting to know Gemma for the short time she worked here at Homage Studios as an assistant, organizing our increasingly chaotic lives. We had no idea of the pain and suffering her illness brought her for she always attacked her assignments with aplomb and cheerful professionalism.

Needless to say, her death has touched us all and especially Whilce and his family, and for obvious reasons, Wetworks has been indefinitely postponed. It will be resolicited later this year only after all three issues are completely penciled. The mini-series will come out on time, each and every month at that point. I know that Whilce apologizes to his fans for the delay and that you in turn understand. Just know that when Wetworks arrives, it will be well worth the wait.

Best—
Jim Lee
Homage Studios
San Diego, CA

VICTORY IS MINE!

REUNIFICATION BEGINS NOW!!

RESOLUTION

IT AIN'T *OVER* YET, HELSPONT. THE *WILDC.A.T.S* MAY BE DOWN FOR THE COUNT, BUT THERE'S STILL *YOUNGBLOOD*--

BAH! THEY ARE OF NO CONSEQUENCE NOW. THE STARGATE IS OPEN AND SOON MY DAEMONITE BROTHERS SHALL COME. LET THE YOUNG-BLOOD RUN ABOUT LIKE A PACK OF HEADLESS CHICKENS.

DON'T LOOK NOW, HELSPONT, BUT IT SEEMS YOUR *CHICKENS* HAVE COME HOME TO ROOST.

SHAFT, BABE. MORE ALIENS POPPING OUT OF THE WOODWORK?!

AYE, EXCEPT THIS ONE APPEARS TO BE AN ACURAN!

IN THE NAME OF THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT, I DEMAND YOU SURRENDER, NOW!

WHY DO WE BOTHER ASKING 'EM TO GIVE UP? I MEAN... THEY *NEVER* DO.

MY... MY POWERS AREN'T WORKING ON HIM. I CAN'T EXORCISE THE DAEMONITE!

HALF-BREED WITCH! WHILE YOU MAY HAVE EXORCISED B'LIAL, YOUR POWERS ARE USELESS AGAINST ONE WHOSE HOST IS NOT HUMAN!

THEN WE'LL HAVE TO USE THE DIRECT APPROACH!

ON MY MARK-- *FIRE!*

ZAM! ZAM! ZAM!

SHING! SHING!

HA! HA! HA! HA!

YOUR PITIFUL WEAPONS ARE *USELESS* AGAINST ME! THE TECHNOLOGY IN THIS FACILITY ENABLES ME TO WIELD THE POWER OF THE ORB, ITSELF!

NOW, FEEL ITS MIGHT!

AAARGH!

VNNN!

EVERYBODY! SCATTER! BEFORE HE-- *UUNGH!*

THERE YOU HAVE IT, PIKE. *NOW*, IT IS OVER.

"BUT OUR PLAN HAS FINALLY REACHED FRUITION. B'LIAL'S POSSESSION OF QUAYLE WAS THE FINAL STEP THAT ENABLED THE CABAL TO COMPLETE PROJECT REUNIFICATION!

"AND WITH ITS TECHNOLOGY, WE HAVE UNLEASHED THE ORB'S ENERGY AND ACTIVATED THE STARGATE. THE SIGNAL HAS ALREADY BEEN SENT FOR MY BROTHERS ON *DAEMON* TO JOIN ME.

"EVEN AS WE SPEAK, A DAEMONITE FLOTILLA IS PREPARING TO PLUNGE INTO THE STARGATE AND BEGIN THE CONQUEST OF THIS PLANET. THEN SHALL THE DEFEAT OF THE KHERUBIM BE COMPLETE!"

VOID, WE...WE'VE GOT TO DO SOMETHING. CAN YOU...

STILL...TOO WEAK... I'M SORRY.

THERE'S STILL A CHANCE, PEOPLE!

I'VE GOT ONE LAST ACE UP MY SLEEVE!

TIK TIK TIK TIK

ELSEWHERE...

CLICK-beepbeepbeep-CLICK

...010Ω010...

...HALO IDENT/ACCESS/ CODE=MARLOWE/ JACOB...

...CONFIRMATION/KOMPLETED...

...0101100110011100111100...

...TERTIARY SYSTEMS ON LINE...

...11010011101000100111001...

...POWER RESERVES REROUTED...

...UNIT ACTIVE.

LIKE LAZURUS, SPARTAN 7 RETURNS FROM THE DEAD.

LEFT BEHIND BY THE OTHERS, SPARTAN WAS TO BE THE FINAL OPTION TO STOP THE CABAL IF EMP'S TEAM FAILED IN SHUTTING DOWN THE REACTOR.

HIS REMAINING ONBOARD SCANNERS SEARCH FOR ANY INHERENT FLAW OR WEAKNESS IN THE FACILITY THAT MAY GIVE THE WILDC.A.T.S AN ADVANTAGE.

SPARTAN FINDS ONLY ONE BUT KNOWS IT WILL BE ENOUGH.

AS HE STRAINS WITH THE LAST OF HIS ENERGY RESERVES TO DEACTIVATE THE RELAY SWITCH, SPARTAN HOPES THE OTHERS WILL HAVE ENOUGH TIME TO ESCAPE.

RIMARY FEE
DO NOT DISENGA
WHILE REACTOR IS ACTIV

AND THOUGH HE STANDS AT DEATH'S THRESHOLD ONCE MORE...

...HE CARRIES ON THE TRADITION OF HIS NAMESAKE.

SPARTAN FIGHTS ON...

...FOR VICTORY.

AT ANY COST.

$%&?#! WHAT'S GOIN' ON NOW?

BOOM!

BY ANDROMACHE! IT'S SOME SORT OF POWER FEEDBACK!

LOOK! THE PRIMARY CONTROL SYSTEMS ARE BURNING OUT. IT'S GOING TO BLOW--

BA BOOM!!

NO! NOOO!! SHUT IT DOWN! BEFORE IT'S--

--TOO LATE!

BA BOOM!!

HUUNGH!

AAAAGH!

AAARRGH! WILL THESE TIRESOME ATTACKS NEVER CEASE?!

MUST HURRY AND REACTIVATE THE CONTROL SYSTEM TO MAINTAIN THE STARGATE...

WARNING! WARNING! PRIMARY SYSTEM INTEGRITY DETERIORATING. ENERGY OUTPUT DROPPING TO CRITICAL LEVELS.

WARBLADE! SPARTAN'S BOUGHT US SOME TIME BUT I NEED HELSPONT DISTRACTED A WHILE LONGER! DON'T LET HIM REACH THOSE CONTROL PANELS!

HEADS UP, HELSPONT!

IT'S SUDDEN DEATH OVERTIME!

TOUCHDOWN!

SKRRACK!

YEEAARGH!

SCORE ONE FOR THE HOME TEAM!

NOW TO RIP YOUR HEART OUT FOR THE EXTRA POINT!

AARRGH!

PRATTLING FOOL! EVEN WITHOUT THE ORB'S ENERGY, YOU'RE NO MATCH FOR MY OWN POWERS!

ZZRRAKK!

DID YOU ACTUALLY THINK YOUR PITIFUL ACT OF SABOTAGE COULD SHUT DOWN THIS BILLION DOLLAR FACILITY? ALL I NEED DO IS ACCESS THE--

BACK-UP SYSTEMS? I DON'T THINK SO, YA SEE, YOU'RE GONNA NEED THIS TWO DOLLAR PROCESSOR, FIRST. COME TO THINK OF IT, WITH THE MAIN CONTROL SYSTEM SHUT DOWN...

...THAT PRECIOUS STARGATE OF YOURS SHOULD BE CLOSING UP--RIGHT ABOUT NOW!

NO! IT CANNOT BE!

CURSE YOU, KHERUBIM! I WAITED THIRTY YEARS FOR THIS DAY!

THOUGH YOU MAY THINK YOU'VE DEFEATED ME, I STILL HAVE THE ORB--AND WITH IT I SHALL DESTROY YOU ALL, MYSELF!

WATCH IT! HE'S BAILING OUT!

JACOB, WE MUST STOP HIM.

I WAS AFRAID YOU'D SAY THAT. THEN YOU BETTER GET US DOWN THERE AHEAD OF HIM, VOID.

GO! MY TEAM WILL TAKE CARE OF HIS TWO CRONIES!

GOOD LUCK!

WE'LL DO OUR BEST, SHAFT.

DAMNATION! WILL I NEVER BE FREE OF YOUR MEDDLING, KHERUBIM?!

NOT WHILE WE'VE STILL GOT OLD SCORES TO SETTLE, HELSPONT!

UNNN

ALL YOUR EFFORTS ARE FOR NAUGHT, MARLOWE, FOR ONCE I OPEN THIS REACTOR CASING, I SHALL HAVE...

...NOTHING?!

THE ORB! IT IS GONE!

PERHAPS *THIS* IS WHAT YOU SEEK, YES?

LORD EMP, IT IS THE GNOME AND HIS TRIAD!

THEY MUST'A BEEN THE ONES WHO SET OFF THE ALARMS!

WHAT'RE YA DOIN' HERE, GNOME?! YOU TIED IN WITH HELSPONT AND THE CABAL?

THE ORB, HUMAN! GIVE IT TO ME!

YOU WISH TO POSSESS THE POWER OF THE ORB, YES?

THEN BY ALL MEANS, FEEL ITS POWER BEFORE YOU *DIE!*

UNNN

YEEAAAGH!

LOOK UPON HIM WELL, FOR THAT IS THE FATE OF THOSE WHO SEEK TO WREST THE POWER OF THE ORB FROM ME!

FOR IT IS MINE AND MINE ALONE!

DESTROY THEM, MY TRIAD!

DESTROY ALL THESE SO-CALLED *HEROES*.

WHILE I SHALL USE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE MY ESCAPE...

GIVE ME THE ORB! YOU DO NOT COMPREHEND ITS POWER! THE BREACHING HAS MADE IT UNSTABLE. RELINQUISH IT TO ME BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE!

UNNN

DON'T THREATEN ME, VOID, FOR I KNOW YOUR SECRET! YOU AND THE ORB ARE *ONE*, YES?

WITH IT, I NOW HAVE THE POWER...

VRMMM!

...TO DESTROY YOU!

AAAIIEEE!

S-STOP, GNOME!

THE ORB-- IS BECOMING --TOO UNSTABLE!

DANGER-- TO US-- ALL!

GIVE IT TO ME--BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE!

VVRM

TURN IT OFF, GNOME!

DROP IT OR SO HELP ME, I'LL DUST YOU WHERE YOU STAND!

EH? HAVE YOU SO QUICKLY FORGOTTEN OUR *BARGAIN*, MARLOWE?

I SHALL CALL IN MY FAVOR-- *NOW. HEROES* DO KEEP THEIR WORD, YES?

JA-- JAAACOOB! HEEELP-- MMEEE!

VVRMM!

AAARRGH! WHA--?!

VNNN!

ZAM!

I TOLD YOU TO DROP IT!

WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?! THE ORB--!!

VNNN

NOOOoo!

WHOEVER SAID I WAS A HERO?

UUUNHHH!

FWOOM

WARNING! EVACUATION PROCEDURES INITIATED. FIVE MINUTES TO CORE REACTOR DIFFUSION.

DIFFUSION? WHAT'S GOIN' ON?

00:05:00

ADRIANNA, THE GNOME'S HISTORY. YOU ALL RIGHT?

THE ORB HAS TRIGGERED A A CORE OVERLOAD, JACOB.

IT'S GOING TO EXPLODE!

WE'LL NEVER MAKE IT OUT ON FOOT, ADRIANNA! YOU'VE GOTTA 'PORT US ALL OUTTA HERE!

I...I CANNOT! THE GNOME'S ATTACK DEPLETED MY POWERS! SAVE YOURSELF AND THE OTHERS, JACOB!

00:04:00

HOPE THIS PLACE AIN'T NO CHERNOBYL OR WE'RE GONNA BE GLOWIN' INTO THE NEXT LIFE!

JUST GRAB THE V.P. AND MOVE IT, BEDROCK. THIS PLACE IS ABOUT TO GO!

00:03:30

PARTY'S OVER, SLAG. PICK UP WHAT'S LEFT OF *HARM* AND LET'S GET THE HELL OUTTA HERE!

YESSS, ATTICA. WE MUSSST ESSSCAPE.

00:03:00

NO SIGN OF HELSPONT. I KNEW WORKING WITH B'LIAL WOULD BE A MISTAKE.

TIME TO BUG OUT.

SOMETHING YOU SEEM TO BE GOOD AT, PIKE!

00:02:00

SHAFT, WHAT OF THE WILDC.A.T.S?

WE'VE DONE ALL WE CAN. THEY'RE ON THEIR OWN, NOW.

00:00:30

I WON'T LEAVE YOU, ADRIANNA. THERE'S GOT TO BE SOME OTHER WAY!

I AM TOO WEAK, JACOB. GO, BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE.

00:00:10

IT CAN'T END LIKE THIS! *I WON'T LET IT!*

WAIT A MINUTE! YOU NEED POWER?

:05 :04 :03 :02 :01

TAKE MY HAND, ADRIANNA. IF I AM WHO YOU SAY, THEN I'VE GOT THE POWER TO HELP YOU! BUT I'LL NEED YOUR HELP IF WE'RE *ALL* GOING TO MAKE IT OUT ALIVE!

I SHALL TRY.

00:00:00

"JUST DO IT!"

S.D.I. ASTRONOMICS. AUGUST 9, 1992. 10:00 A.M. EST.

WHAT'S THE WORD ON THE V.P., SHAFT?

MEDIVAC'S TAKING HIM TO BETHESDA RIGHT NOW, FOR OBSERVATION, BUT HE LOOKS ALL RIGHT OTHERWISE.

WHADDABOUT PROJECT REUNIFICATION?

NASA SAYS NONE OF THE ALIEN SHIPS MADE IT THROUGH INTACT AND WHATEVER WAS LEFT BURNED UP DURING RE-ENTRY.

HOW ARE THE CLEANERS DOING?

THE FORENSICS TEAM'S FINISHIN' UP NOW.

THEY FIND ANYTHING?

NAH. NO SIGN OF HELSPONT, GNOME OR HIS TRIAD. NONE OF THE WILDC.A.T.S EITHER. WELL..., EXCEPT--

--FOR THE CYBORG.

THE ONE THEY CALLED SPARTAN.

WHAT EXACTLY HAPPENED, SHAFT?

THE BLACKBOX RECORDERS SAY SPARTAN SHUT DOWN HELSPONT BY DEACTIVATING THE REACTOR RELAY SWITCH-- CUTTING HIM OFF FROM THE ORB.

THE FEEDBACK FRIED SPARTAN'S SYSTEMS. THE MAN SACRIFICED HIMSELF TO SAVE US.

YA THINK THE OTHERS MADE IT OUT?

THEY SEEMED A RESOURCEFUL BUNCH BEDROCK. I WOULDN'T BE SURPRISED IF OUR PATHS CROSSED AGAIN.

IT'S SPARTAN! BUT HOW? I SAW SPARTAN--

--DIE? NAW, YA SEE, HE CAN'T REALLY *DIE* LIKE THE REST OF US. HE'S A CYBER-SYNTHETIC BEING. *SAME* MIND, JUST *DIFFERENT* BODIES.

IN FACT, ALL HIS MEMORIES ARE BEING DOWNLOADED INTO THIS NEW BODY WHILE HE'S IN THIS REST CYCLE. COUPLE OF HOURS AND HE'LL BE HIS OLD SELF!

I'M... I'M GLAD.

WHAT'S UP, ADRIANNA? YA BEEN KINDA QUIET.

I WAS JUST THINKING ABOUT MY DREAMS, JACOB.

I *DIED* IN MY FIRST BATTLE WITH THE GNOME.

BUT AS MY CONSCIOUSNESS WAS SHATTERED INTO OBLIVION, A SPLINTER OF IT CAME BACK IN TIME TO INFLUENCE THE PAST-- AND TO CAUSE ME TO SEEK YOUR HELP IN THE IMPENDING CONFRONTATION.

IT WAS YOUR INTERVENTION THAT MADE THE DIFFERENCE.

SO YA GOT IT RIGHT THIS TIME. NOTHIN' WRONG WITH THAT.

IT IS JUST THAT, NOW, THE FUTURE IS SO... *UNCLEAR*. I'M NOT SURE WHAT TOMORROW WILL BRING.

WELCOME BACK TO THE HUMAN RACE, ADRIANNA.

AS LONG AS THE SUN SHINES AND THE WIND BLOWS, THERE'LL ALWAYS BE TOMORROW. AND IT'LL BE UP TO PEOPLE LIKE US TO MAKE SURE IT'S ALWAYS A BETTER ONE THAN THE ONE BEFORE.

EPILOGUE

XTRA! XTRA! READ ALL ABOUT IT! QUAYLE AN ALIEN!

EXCUSE ME THERE, SON, I'LL TAKE A COPY.

SURE, MISTER. COST YA BUCK-FIFTY.

NATIONAL EY

AN ALIE

QUAYLE POSSE EXTRATERR

WELL, WELL. WHAT HAVE WE HERE...

...hmmph!

WELL, I'LL BE DAMNED.

AGE COMICS EXPANDS

KIRBY IS COMING!

XTRA! XTRA! READ ALL ABOUT IT!

YOU WERE RIGHT, MARLOWE. I WOULD'VE LOCKED YOU UP IF YOU'D TOLD ME.

QUAYLE AN ALIEN!

END

ZONE